THE GLOBE AND MAIL

HD **Calgary mayor Jyoti Gondek's climate emergency declaration headed for a vote**

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The motion could follow similar declarations made by Edmonton, Vancouver and Halifax, but it could be seen as provocative in Calgary, whose economy has largely been built on fossil fuels

Calgary's new mayor moved ahead Tuesday with her plan to declare a climate emergency in the city - an initiative that has drawn scorn from the Alberta Premier among others.

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Mayor Jyoti Gondek, a former city councillor, announced the plan shortly after she won the municipal election last month.

If her motion passes, Calgary would follow similar, largely symbolic declarations in cities such as Edmonton, Vancouver and Halifax. But the motion could be seen as especially provocative in Calgary, whose economy has largely been built on fossil fuels. Premier Jason Kenney has criticized the plan as "peculiar" and said the city should be focusing on more important things.

A council committee voted unanimously Tuesday to move the motion forward for a debate and vote next week.

"I am glad that we are getting into this race, because we don't want to be cheerleaders on the sidelines, and cheering and seeing our competitors in this race winning it," Councillor Raj Dhaliwal said during Tuesday's meeting.

Councillor Jyoti Gondek wins mayoral race in Calgary; former Liberal cabinet minister Amarjeet Sohi wins in Edmonton

Ms. Gondek campaigned as a centrist candidate and defeated another councillor, Jeromy Farkas. While she had put forward several policies to address climate change, Ms. Gondek has been criticized for proposing the climate emergency declaration without including it in her platform.

The rough draft of the motion outlined in the meeting includes plans to update the greenhouse gas reduction target for a net-zero emission by 2050, to implement a carbon budget and to provide mitigation measures on the Bow River.

Most council members expressed their support for the motion, though a few raised concerns about the language in it.

Councillors Sonya Sharp and Peter Demong questioned the use of the term "emergency."

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Dick Ebersohn, the city manager for climate change and environment, told the councillors that the declaration doesn't give the city any additional power or authority.

"Declaring a climate emergency is not the same as declaring a state of local emergency," Mr. Ebersohn told the meeting.

Councillor Dan McLean said he was disappointed council was treating the climate emergency declaration as a high priority, when the city has other issues that need to be addressed.

"We've got a lot of emergencies and no one's really declared them as emergencies," he said in an interview after Tuesday's council meeting.

Other councillors had come out in favour of the motion at Tuesday's meeting.

Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra said in a recent interview that he supports the declaration, as climate action was one of the three values of his re-election campaign.

Mr. Carra said the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that an emergency can be more than just a "short and disruptive moment in time," and he now thinks it's appropriate to talk about climate change as an emergency.

Meanwhile, Councillor Sean Chu questioned the legality of the declaration and called for a legal opinion.

"I believe that any common-sense person would find this declaration confusing, as council in 2018 unanimously passed a climate plan for the city to lower our GHG emissions," he said in an e-mailed statement. "So are we now just duplicating efforts?"

Mr. Kenney said last month that he was perplexed by the Mayor's initiative and urged the city to instead focus on reviving its economy.

"In a city that has been suffering from near double-digit unemployment and that has gone through five years of deep economic adversity, I found that [the declaration] a peculiar priority," he said at a news conference shortly after Ms. Gondek announced her plans to push for a climate emergency declaration.

"I would have thought that the Mayor of Calgary's top priority would be to get Calgarians back to work; that's certainly my top priority."

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